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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UN](#) [KCRM](#) [UNODC](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: INL A/S JOHNSON MEETINGS ON AFGHANISTAN AND
RELATED REGIONAL COUNTERNARCOTICS EFFORTS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR G. DAVIES, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) During a brief stopover in Vienna, INL Assistant Secretary David Johnson met on December 9 with UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa and with UNODC officials involved in regional and bilateral counternarcotics (CN) work with Iran. Ambassador Davies also hosted a lunch briefing for Vienna-based Ambassadors on the new Afghanistan strategy and its relation to ongoing CN efforts. The day's discussions highlighted the critical role of regional cooperation, including through multilateral initiatives such as the Paris Pact, to CN work in Afghanistan. UNODC officials noted Iran's interest in regional CN efforts relating to Afghanistan, with special emphasis on its Triangular Initiative which encompasses Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. END SUMMARY

AFGHANISTAN LUNCH

12. (U) At a lunch hosted by Ambassador Davies and attended by representatives from Afghanistan, Australia, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, Spain and Turkey, Assistant Secretary Johnson and Ambassador Davies moderated a lively discussion on Afghanistan CN efforts. Assistant Secretary Johnson noted President Obama's clear goal of moving more rapidly to help Afghan's sustain themselves. He discussed how U.S. counternarcotics (CN) efforts are becoming increasingly focused on building the rule of law, particularly in population centers. The role of the military was growing in the areas of police training, and CN efforts were being refocused with a greater emphasis on interdiction vice eradication. Later in the lunch, Assistant Secretary Johnson outlined two important lessons from work in the Golden Triangle and elsewhere: that ungoverned territory is our enemy and that interdiction is more effective when it is closer to the source.

13. (U) Afghanistan Ambassador Dr. Abdul Shoogufan emphasized that Afghanistan's drug problems required joint efforts from a number of countries. He praised the CN approach described by Assistant Secretary Johnson, opining that a greater focus on alternative development will help grow Afghanistan's agricultural sector. German Ambassador Rudiger Ludeking commented on the downward movement of Afghanistan on the Transparency International corruption index, and wondered if our efforts were sustainable in such an environment.

Recently installed Ambassador Ramazan Bayer from Turkey replied that in his experience, which included a posting in Afghanistan some 30 years ago, the central government, however corrupt, had limited influence and that the key to sustainability was to focus on the provincial and local levels.

¶4. (U) Indian Charge Dinesh Patniak questioned why the spotlight of the international community was focused on the porous borders of Afghanistan, as opposed to the borders of the European Union, where technology and expertise is greater but where the Europeans have failed to stem the tide of heroin and opium to its citizens. Assistant Secretary Johnson refuted the notion that Afghanistan and the region would not face any drug problems if the U.S. and Europe somehow halted their demand for Afghan drugs. He noted that nearby countries like Iran are already major users of heroin that can be linked to Afghanistan.

¶5. (U) Australian Ambassador Michael Potts noted the challenge of interdiction, and argued for greater intelligence sharing. Even in Australia, an island with no porous land borders, it is difficult to interdict and almost all of Australia's notable seizures of contraband are based on intelligence. Spanish DCM Santiago Martinez-Caro and Turkey Ambassador Bayer seconded the importance of intelligence sharing among neighboring and other countries.

¶6. (U) Japan Ambassador Takeshi Nakane announced that Japan's recent multi-billion dollar pledge to Afghanistan will include contributions to UNODC for border control, demand reduction and alternative development. He hopes publicly to announce this contribution soon.

MEETING WITH UNODC, S COSTA: AFRICA, AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN

¶7. (U) During Assistant Secretary Johnson's meeting with UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa, Costa described as &extraordinary⁸ his recent visit to the UN Security Council to discuss drug trafficking and drug use in Africa. His speech emphasized how the problems in East and West Africa are &meeting in the middle,⁸ with growing criminal and drug use activity in the ungoverned areas in between. He saw firsthand in a recent visit to Africa how the drug problem had spread, describing addicts carrying needles &like one would carry pens.⁸ He thanked the U.S. for Ambassador Rice's strong statement of support during that session. While in New York, he also met with UN's Peacekeeping Office and Political Affairs Office to discuss increasing their information sharing and mutual support in this area of the world. He hopes to receive some funding for work in the region from Arab nations such as Libya and Algeria. Costa also mentioned that the French, in their future presidency of the Security Council, intend to conduct sessions that will focus on other drug-prone problem regions, such as Afghanistan, Iran, the Andes region and Myanmar.

¶8. (U) Costa then moved to the report on Afghan corruption which his office is finalizing. UNODC is aiming to release the report sometime in mid-January. Costa said the data will be analyzed by geographic region, sector, and rural versus urban. He cautioned that we must not use this very local data (14,000 people surveyed in 4,000 villages) to make any judgments about higher-level corruption. UNODC hopes to develop a second report that would focus on higher-level corruption, which is trickier to capture.

¶9. (U) Assistant Secretary Johnson requested UNODC to identify additional criteria that they think would help measure CN progress in Afghanistan. This would be useful as we move away from our focus on eradication and poppy cultivation. Sandeep Chawla, Director for Research at UNODC, commented that it may be useful to look at the bigger picture of trafficking flows. Andrea Mancini, a UNODC research official, explained that UNODC was already testing a new

monitoring system at the provincial level that would look at law enforcement, alternative livelihoods and other data. Costa agreed that this would be worth pursuing.

¶10. (SBU) Costa provided his opinion on Iran,s upcoming chairmanship of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). He feels that the Iranian Ambassador has been a &fair chair8 in the past, and would likely act accordingly for the CND. He mentioned Iran,s fairly advanced demand reduction activities, which belies their image. While they like to blame the West for their problems, they are quietly beginning to acknowledge the increase in heroin use by Iranians, particularly in urban areas. Chawla said the Iranians are still only providing minimal attention to the supply issue, and that the supply data they produce does not have the integrity to provide any useful pictures.

¶11. (U) Costa ended the meeting by informing Assistant Secretary Johnson of the expansion of UNODC,s anti-piracy work in Africa. He thanked the U.S. for its financial support, and noted that they intend to expand their technical assistance operations into Somalia itself, from their current base in Kenya. UNODC will also takeover administration of the new trust fund established for funding justice-related technical assistance related to fighting piracy. UNDP had been named administrator, but people were unhappy with UNDP,s attention to the fund. He discussed this issue in New York with Lynn Pascoe and they agreed that the fund will &be moved to Vienna8 and administered by UNODC.

WORKING WITH IRAN

12.(C) Assistant Secretary Johnson met with Roberto Arbitrio, Chief of the Executive Director,s Office Roberto, who previously spent five years running UNODC,s office in Tehran, and Andrea Mancini, a UNODC Research Officer, for a briefing on UNODC,s programs in Iran and Iranian cooperation

on the counternarcotics issue. Arbitrio noted his belief that even after the elections, Tehran remains interested in cooperation on counternarcotics, but was sanguine that Iran also will use the issue as a leverage point and could withdraw cooperation if it feels the need to react to Western actions in Afghanistan or elsewhere, calling this a policy of &ambiguity.8 While we can expect that Iran will continue to blame the West for the drugs coming out of Afghanistan and even will accuse the West of actually facilitating the drug problem, this does not mean that Iran is not interested in engagement or committed to drug control, since Tehran takes CN seriously given its internal drug use problems. Iran wants to be recognized for these extensive efforts and to be seen as a peer in combating drugs.

13.(C) In response to Johnson,s question about whether Iran is doing anything to facilitate the transit of narcotics through Iran, Arbitrio argued that most of the drugs transit the Sistan va Baluchistan province, where Iran has little control and is worried about stability and the growth of a greater Baluch movement. Similarly, the border areas elsewhere are dangerous and &no one knows what is happening there,8 acknowledging the possibility that Iran or Iranians could be involved to some degree. (Comment: Arbitrio has told us elsewhere that he doubts that Tehran as a policy would be facilitating the drug trade given the serious problem Iran faces in combating trafficking, but he cannot rule out that some officials on the borders are corrupt since they are not well paid and operate in a part of the world where corruption often runs rampant, and that elements of the Iranian government could have different objectives. End Comment)

¶14. (C) Looking forward to the Iranian presidency of the CND, Arbitrio noted that Iran has not yet made its intentions completely clear. Nevertheless, Iran has signaled that a regional approach to Afghanistan is a priority, and this is likely to be Iran,s focus. Arbitrio said that Iran,s

interactions at the last CND showed that it wants to be a partner on development assistance to Afghanistan. He did not specifically push for cooperation between the U.S. and Iran, but again informed us of Iran,s interest in engagement generally in CN matters with the West, including through peer-to-peer discussions and engagement with the mini-Dublin Group. Mancini added as encouragement that it was a major step that Iran and the U.S. agreed on the same strategy on counternarcotics through the Paris Pact.

COMMENTS

¶15. (U) The theme of the day was not surprisingly the need for regional cooperation in our CN efforts, particularly related to Afghanistan and in emerging hotspots such as Africa. Costa highlighted the need for increasing international attention and cooperation related to Africa, and the challenge of generating interest and engagement among regional players such as the Arab countries of North Africa, even if only through financial support. END COMMENT
DAVIES